

The Baltimore Teachers Union



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Sharon Y. Blake
President

November 26, 2001

The Honorable J. Frederick Motz
United States District Court
District of Maryland
510 Garmatz Federal Office Building
101 West Lombard Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Re: Microsoft Antitrust Litigation

Dear Judge Motz:

I am the President of The Baltimore Teachers Union, American Federation of Teachers, Local 340, AFL-CIO ("The BTU"). On behalf of The BTU, I reviewed the terms of the proposed Settlement Agreement, particularly Section IV – Education Programs, in consultation with Nicholas T. Lee, our Director of Educational Issues, who is a teacher on leave and was a former executive of IBM. The BTU enthusiastically supports the Settlement Agreement, and urges this Honorable Court to approve it.

The BTU is the exclusive bargaining agent for the teachers and paraprofessionals who work in the Baltimore City Public Schools ("BCPS"). The BTU represents over 7,300 teachers and over 1,400 paraprofessionals. I am a social sciences teacher. I have been a classroom practitioner in the BCPS for over twenty-five years. Before my election as president of The BTU, I taught social studies classes at Frederick Douglass High School for ten years. The statements and representations made in this letter are based upon my personal knowledge and experiences as a teacher, a union leader, and an urban education advocate.

The challenges facing the BCPS with respect to its need for instructional technology were summarized recently in the BCPS Remedy Plan for additional funding submitted to the Maryland General Assembly during its 2001 legislative session from January 2001 to April 2001.

First, each of the 82 elementary schools with 525 students or less needs one computer lab. In addition, each of the other 100 schools in the system need two computer labs. There should be 286 labs in the schools. However, 65 schools have no labs. The rationale for the labs is stated in the Remedy Plan as follows:

Computer labs allow students to work independently and at their own pace. Instruction in applications and computer use is an important component in any educational program in the information age. A computer lab with appropriate software can test basic skills, administer remedial activities, and allow students to master skills in all subject areas (Page 31).

Second, in order to meet state standards, the BCPS must add more than 15,000 classroom computers. Costs will exceed an estimated \$6 million and will include hardware, software, maintenance, upgrades and training. The rationale for this initiative is stated in the Remedy Plan as follows:

Teachers and students need to be able to access available technological resources. A great deal of money is currently being spent to upgrade all BCPS schools with the necessary infrastructure to allow educational access to the Internet, the World Wide Web, and other resources. This infrastructure can only be used if computers are available in classrooms (Page 32).

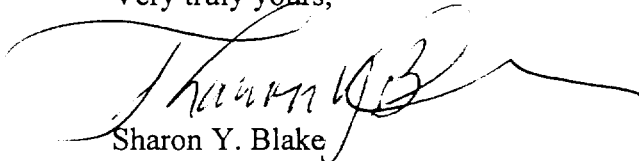
The initiatives set forth in the Settlement Agreement will:

- Boost morale of key educational stakeholders, teachers, students, parents and administrators
- Motivate students to attend and remain in school
- Provide a technological link to the Internet for social studies and all other subject areas
- Provide technical skills that are highly marketable today and in the future

The Settlement Agreement could not have come at a better time for the BCPS. Although The Maryland Plan for Technology in Education: 1999-2003, calls for the fiscal support of instructional technology in pre-schools, middle schools and high schools, the funding is not likely to be forthcoming until the latter years. Children in the BCPS need instructional technology now, not three or four years from now.

The BTU firmly believes that the Settlement Agreement will benefit students in the BCPS, most of whom are poor and African-American. The Settlement Agreement will help Baltimore City to close the wide and widening digital divide that exists between its students and those who live in the wealthier subdivisions of Maryland such as Montgomery and Howard Counties that can better support the technology needs of their students with funding.

Very truly yours,



Sharon Y. Blake
President